State Technical Committee Meeting – 12/02/2021

ALL POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS ARE ON THE WEBSITE & the video can be found on our YouTube page.


WELCOME AND THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE! – Brad Soncksen, ASTC-P & John Wilson, Acting State Conservationist

- Went over the Agenda
  - John Wilson introduced himself again.
    - The new STC should be identified by Mid to later January.
    - He is only acting till December 3, 2021.
    - Stacy Riley (ASTC-P), from Oklahoma will be acting State Conservationist for the next 120 days starting on Monday, December 6, 2021
- Agency Priorities for FY2022
  - Ensure Equity in the delivery & implementation of all the NRCS Programs & Services.
  - Increase assistance for climate smart agriculture in forestry to support Producers in building resiliency across their operations.
  - Expand conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of Urban farmers & communities nationwide.
  - Cultivate a complete & diverse workforce that will have the right tools, technologies & training that will uphold the scientific integrity of NRCS.
  - Five leverage innovation partnerships to expand NRCS ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.
- Things happening in Nebraska
  - Advertising an outreach coordinator position to help expand the underserved areas.
  - Have an Urban Ag Committee led by Carlos Villarreal.
  - Due to Covid restrictions we are still having Teams meetings, however the plan is for national leadership to start going back into the office this month, then State Leadership starting going back in January & fully staffed by Mid-March. Subject to change due to Omicron variant.
- Introductions.
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS UPDATES - Brad Soncksen, NRCS

❖ CSP
  o CSP – Nebraska
    ▪ Total Active CSP Contracts as of December 2021
      • Contracts = 2,092
        Contract Acres = 3,410,068
      • Obligated funds = $145,925,748.00

    ▪ FY 2022 Allocations
      • CSP Classic
        o $8.6 Million
      • CSP Renewal
        o $6.6 Million
      • CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative
        o $50,000.00

    ▪ FY 2022 Applications
      • Applications
        o Classic
          ▪ 747
        o Renewal
          ▪ 348
        o GCI
          ▪ 15

  o FY2022 CSP Classic application deadline = November 19, 2021
  o FY2022 CSP Classic Fund Pools
    ▪ 23 fund pools to align with DC administrative boundaries
    ▪ 6 fund pool areas

❖ ACEP
  o FY2022 ACEP – Nebraska
    ▪ Around 3 million funding level
    ▪ Expect to fund at least 4-6 Easements
  o Applications received
    • ACEP-WRE
      o 38 Applications
      o 4,072 Acres
    • ACEP-ALE
      o 1 Application
      o 3,3500 Acres
ACEP-WRE
- Moved forward with 3 WRE Applications
  - 835 Acres
  - $2.3 million estimated acquisition costs
  - $600,000.00 estimated restoration costs
  - Working on obligating the funds.

ACEP-ALE
- 1 ALE Application
  - 6,200 acres
  - Currently working on eligibility & ranking
  - Estimated $1.4 Million federal share

Applications taken year-round.
FY2022 application cut-off October 15, 2021.
This was for WRE, WRE-WREP and ALE.
Using appraisals again in FY2022 to determine acquisition costs.

- Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC’s) for FY 2022
  - NOT TO EXCEED RATE = $9,535.00 for Irrigated Cropland
  - NOT TO EXCEED RATE = $5,000.00 for all other land uses

NEBRASKA ACEP-WRE
- Reduction of Fair Market Value (FMV) to determine GARC’S
  - 10% WEST, NORTH, SOUTHWEST
  - 15% CENTRAL
  - 20% NORTHWEST, SOUTHEAST, MISSOURI RIVER

- FY 2022 ACEP-FPE Nebraska
  - Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-PFE)
    - Applications
      - 21
    - Acres
      - 5,590
    - Estimated Requested funding
      - $20,313,085.00
    - 10 have cancelled or found ineligible
    - Offers accepted
      - 8
    - Pending
      - 3
    - Acres
      - 1,320
EQIP

- EQIP -NE
  - Active Contracts as of December 2021
    - 2,407
    - Acres
      - 983,000
    - Obligated funds
      - $78.0 million
    - Total Active Contracts
      - 2,650

- EQIP High Priority Practices
  - State Conservationists, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, have the option to select up to 10 high priority practices, which may receive increased payment rates. A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:
    - Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in ground or surface water;
    - Addresses the conservation of water, to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers;
    - Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
    - Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.

*Selection of practices to receive higher payment should incentivize conservation practices that have high potential for conservation but are underutilized.

- EQIP High Priority Practices (Maximum of 10 practices allowed)
  - 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
  - 338 – Prescribed Burning
  - 386 – Field Border
  - 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
  - 393 – Filter Strip
  - 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting
  - 472 – Access Control
  - 590 – Nutrient Management
  - 595 – Pest Management
  - 657 – Wetland Restoration

- EQIP Fund Pools FY 2022
  - 2022 Mandatory Distribution
    - Source Water Protection – 10%
    - Wildlife Initiative – 10%
    - Historically Underserved – 10%
    - EQIP-CIC = 5%
    - Livestock – 50%

- FY2022 STATEWIDE FUND POOLS
  - Advanced Cover Crop Initiative
  - NE Great Plains Grassland Initiative
  - Working Lands for Wildlife – Sandhills
- Seasonal High Tunnel
- Organic
- Energy
- Conservation Activity Plans
- Animal Feeding Operations
- Tribal
- Disaster

- **FY 2022 General EQIP Allocation = $25.5 Million**
  - Wildlife (10% combined with NE-GPGI) = $1.35 million
  - Historically Underserved (10%) = $2.55 million
  - Source Water Protection (10%) = $2.55 million
  - NE Great Plains Grassland Initiative = $1.2 Million
  - EQIP-CIC (5%) = $1.3 million
  - Advanced Cover Crop Initiative = $300,000.00
  - Animal Feeding Operations = $1.0 Million
  - Disaster = $1.0 Million
  - Conservation Activity Plans = $200,000.00
  - Sandhills Working Lands for Wildlife = $100,000.00
  - High Tunnels = $100,000.00
  - Organic = $100,000.00
  - Tribal = $100,000.00
  - Energy = $25,000.00

- **FY2022 PARTNERSHIP FUND POOLS**
  - National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
    - 3 Projects
      - Bazile, Big Sandy, Turkey
    - Allocation
      - $1.7 million
  - Water Smart (Bureau of Reclamation)
    - 2 Projects
      - URNRD
        - $250,000.00
      - MRNRD
        - $524,000.00
  - Forest Service (Joint Chiefs)
    - 1 Project
      - UNWNRD, MNNRD, ULRD
    - Allocation
      - $500,000.00

- FY 2022 EQIP Application Deadline (all fund pools with possible exceptions for disaster, RCPP, NWQI)
  - **NOVEMBER 19, 2021**

- ADVANCED COVER CROP INITIATIVE
  - **FEBRUARY 18, 2022**
EQIP-CONSERVATION INCENTIVE CONTRACTS (CIC)

**PURPOSE:**
- To incentivize additional conservation around locally established resource priorities:
  - States identify **High Priority Area(s)** (HPA)
  - States identify **Priority Resource Concern(s)** (PRC) associated with HPA
  - States identify relevant land uses and the set of **incentive practices** that will address the PRC(s) in the HPA(s).
- Steppingstone for producers from EQIP to CSP:
  - Allows producers to implement elements of CSP on a smaller scale

**Incorporation of CSP-like program policy**
- Producers must address at least 1 **priority resource concern**
- Provides **annual payments** for certain incentive practices and enhancements to attain increased levels of conservation
- Provides **practice payments** to implement an incentive practice
- **Contract length:**
  - All CIC contracts will be 5 years

**Payments are made of two components:**
1. **Incentive practice payments** for adopting and installing practices
2. **Annual payments** for managing, maintaining, and improving incentive practices during the contract period

**Aggregate payment limitation:**
- **May not exceed $200k** total payments to person or legal entity
- Joint Operations (bus type 2 or 3) have a **contract limits not to exceed $400K**
- Payment Limitation may not be waived

**Allocations**
- States will reserve 5% of the general EQIP allocation or $200,000, whichever is greater for FY2021
  - States have the option to set aside more than the minimum amount, up to 20%, if they choose.
  - States will have the flexibility to roll unused funds back to the EQIP general fund

**Requirement for establishing high priority areas within each State** that form the backdrop for the new incentive contracts.
- NRCS shall **identify up to 3 priority resource concerns for each land use** within a given high priority area.
- NRCS shall **identify which practices qualify as incentive practices** for each land use within each high priority area based on the priority resource concern(s) identified for that land use.

**EQIP CIC –Priority Resource Concerns**
- **Goal:** Improve Soil Health through adoption of incentive practices to attain increased levels of conservation
- **Outcomes:**
  - Increase soil health in State
  - Due to positive experiences under EQIP CIC, some participants go on to pursue further conservation benefits on their entire operation through applying for CSP
- **Land Use:**
  - Crop
  - Pasture
  - Range

- **Priority Resource Concern:**
  - Soil Quality Limitations

- **EQIP CIC –Incentive Practices**
  - Focus is on Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry and Drought Mitigation Practices
  - 32 eligible management practices (1 year lifespan)
  - 5 CEMAs
    - CEMAs are not required to be scheduled
    - Encouraged if applicable to the operation
  - Management practices can be scheduled 5 years if practical for the operation

**Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMA):** These activities include assessment, monitoring, recordkeeping for a special purpose, requirements, or assessing the effectiveness of conservation practices and activities.

- **Example CEMA’s:**
  - 216-Soil Health Testing
  - 217-Soil health and Source Testing For Nutrient Management
  - 218-Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment

- **Goal:** Select practices/enhancements that target soil health
  - Example Management Practices:
    - 340-Cover Crop
    - 328-Conservation Crop Rotation
    - 329-Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
  - Example CEMA’s:
    - 216-Soil Health Testing
    - 217-Soil health and Source Testing For Nutrient Management
    - 218-Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment

- **EQIP CIC –Contract Schedule**
  - Year 1: Schedule 340-Cover Crop
  - Year 1: Schedule 216 –Soil Health Testing
  - Year 2: Schedule 340-Cover Crop
  - Year 3: Schedule 340-Cover Crop
  - Year 4: Schedule 340 –Cover Crop
  - Year 5: Schedule 340-Cover Crop
  - Year 5: Schedule 216 –Soil Health Testing

- **High Priority Areas:**
  - Represent areas of significant concern
  - Must encompass every region within the State
  - May encompass an entire State or overlap with other high priority areas
    - Set of High Priority Areas must cover the whole state
o EQIP CIC –High Priority Area
   ▪ STATEWIDE IN FY2022

o EQIP CIC –Next Steps
   ▪ Develop ranking tools
     • December/January
   ▪ Train staff
     • December/January
   ▪ Advertise and announce signup
     • No later than December 30, 2021
   ▪ Rank and approve applications
     • March/April
   ▪ Obligate contracts
     • July
   ▪ Full completely obligated
     • August

Offer to anyone on here that if you have any thoughts or input, we can setup a Teams call or phone call.

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❖ SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

o Source Water Protection Practice List: *Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate.
   ▪ 327 - Conservation Cover
   ▪ 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation *
   ▪ 332 - Contour Buffer Strips
   ▪ 340 - Cover Crop *
   ▪ 342 - Critical Area Planting
   ▪ 355 - Well Water Testing
   ▪ 386 - Field Border
   ▪ 390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
   ▪ 391 - Riparian Forest Buffer
   ▪ 393 - Filter Strip
   ▪ 412 - Grassed Waterway
   ▪ 449 - Irrigation Water Management *
   ▪ 590 - Nutrient Management *
   ▪ 635 - Vegetated Treatment Area
   ▪ 656 - Constructed Wetland
   ▪ 351 - Water Well Decommissioning *
   ▪ 430 - Irrigation Pipeline
   ▪ 441 - Irrigation System, Micro irrigation *
   ▪ 442 - Sprinkler System *
   ▪ 512 - Forage and Biomass Planting
   ▪ 550 - Range Planting
   ▪ 595 - Integrated Pest Management *
   ▪ 657 - Wetland Restoration *
   ▪ 659 - Wetland Enhancement
LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS

- **FY 2022**
  - Meetings completed in January/February 2022
  - **LOCAL WORK GROUP AGENDA ITEMS:**
    - Priority Resource Concerns
    - Fund Pools - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
    - Practice Payment Schedule
    - Local issues

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS UPDATE – *Tammy Timms, Initiatives Coordinator, NRCS*

- REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)
  - **FB 14 RCPP**
    - RCPP Project #1661 Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27
      - Agreement - Started in 2017
        - Lead Partner:
          - Lower Platte North NRD
            - PL-566 Flood Control
        - $1.5M RCPP Funds
        - Status:
          - Watershed Plan
            - Pending Approval – Cultural Resource
            - Requesting One-Year No-Cost Extension
        - Expires
          - 6/30/2022
    - RCPP Project #1712 Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam
      - The Agreement - Started in 2018
        - Lead Partner
          - Papio Missouri River NRD
            - PL-566 Flood Control
        - RCPP Funds $4.46M
        - Status
          - Watershed plan stage
        - Expires
          - 12/31/2023
    - RCPP Project #1564 Divots in the Pivots
      - The Agreement - Started in 2017
        - Lead Partner:
          - Upper Big Blue NRD
        - Classic RCPP
          - Critical Conservation Area – Prairie Grasslands
        - $1.8M RCPP Funds
Expires
- 9/30/2022

Goals
- Restoring Wetlands by enrolling in ACEP-ALE & ACEP-WRE
- Upgrading Irrigation Systems to Variable Rate Irrigation via EQIP Producer contracts

Status:
- 6 total EQIP Contracts
  - $58,963.63
- ACEP-ALE
  - 4 Agreements
    - 5 Parcels (CLOSED)
- ACEP-WRE
  - 2 Agreements
    - 1 Parcel closed
    - 1 Parcel pending
  - Project in process of requesting one-year no-cost extension.

FB 18 RCPP
- RCPP Project #1966 Resilient Futures for Nebraska Soils: Soil Carbon Project
  - The Agreement Started in 2021
    - Lead Partner
      - TNC
    - RCPP Funds $4.3M
  - Goals
    - Enroll 100,000 acres over 5yrs
    - Store 150,000 metric tons CO2
    - Prevent 375,000 tons of soil erosion
    - Link Producers to Carbon Credits (ESMC)
  - Status
    - FY21
      - 20 RCPP LM Contracts
        - $545,571.00
          - 7,000 Acres
            - 1 Crop rotation
            - 5 No-Till
            - 19 Cover Crops
    - FY22 Goals
      - 50 RCPP LM Contracts
        - $700,00.00 (TBD)
          - Project Training to NRCS FO’s held November 30
  - Expires:
    - 2025
  - APPLICATION SIGNUP DEADLINE DECEMBER 17, 2021.
- RCPP Project #2135 Cropland Cover for Soil Health & Wildlife: aka Cropland Cover Initiative
  - The Agreement started 2021
    - Lead Partner
      - NGPC
    - RCPP Funds $700,000.00
    - The Goals:
      - Plant 7,000 acres multi-species cover crop
      - Allowing grazing to max 75% - Leaving 25% for wildlife
      - FY22
        - 25 RCPP LM Contracts
          - $150,000.00 (TBD)
    - Status:
      - Start winter 2021
      - Hayes-Frontier-Hitchcock-Red Willow-Furnas-Harlan Counties
      - Practices
        - 472 Access Control
        - 340-Cover Crop
      - Project Training to NRCS FO’s December 7, 2021
  - APPLICATION SIGNUP DEADLINE December 30, 2021 (Could have another in April of 2022)

- RCPP Project #2271 Ogallala Aquifer & Platter River Recovery
  - The Agreement
    - Still Negotiating
    - Lead Partner
      - Central Platte NRD
    - RCPP Funds $2.7 Million
    - The Goals
      - Continue reduction of water consumption and depletions by converting irrigated to dryland or efficient irrigation methods and technologies via RCPP Land Management Producer contracts.
    - Status
      - Start Spring 2022
      - Location
        - Twin Platte & Central Platte NRD

- RCPP Project #2173 Nebraska Forest Restoration Partnership
  - The Agreement
    - Started October 2021
    - Lead Partner
      - Nebraska Forest Service
    - Alternative Funding Arrangement
    - RCPP Funds $44.5M
    - The Goals
      - Restore 5% Oak/Cottonwood Forests
      - Renovate 5% declining windbreaks
      - Recover 10% lost windbreak cover (16 NRDS’s)
    - Status:
      - Finalizing Supplemental Agreement
        - Financial Assistance
        - Technical Assistance
RCPP Project #2434 Platte & Playa Wetland Protection #2434

- The Agreement
  - Classic RCPP
  - Negotiating
  - Lead Partner
    - Ducks Unlimited
  - $1.3M

- The Goals
  - 640 ac Entity-Held Easements:
    - Restoration – crop-able wetland (unlike WRE)
    - Conservation Land – Non-development easement for land adjacent to playa wetlands (wetland on site not required)
  - 150 Acres of protected wetland and restored wetlands

- RCPP FARM BILL 18 CHANGES
  - Changes in Producer Contracts – Under development
    - Protracts Contracts = Land Management/ Rental Contracts
    - No longer using Protracts system
    - Using Conservation Desktop (CD)
      - Seeing challenges in the software to work the way we want to.
      - Still under development
    - Conservation Desktop (CD)
      - Applications will be entered into CD
      - Conservation Planning/Assessments/Ranking/ SAT
      - Conservation Development, Management, & Administration (Includes payments to producers)
      - FY21 & FY22
        - Manually entered software system

- FY 2021 RCPP
  - ALTERNATIVE FUNDING ARRANGEMENT OPPORTUNITY
    - Request for Proposals
      - May 28, 2021
        - National Selections
          - Announced in October
            - NONE SELECTED IN NEBRASKA

- FY 2022 RCPP
  - Classic RCPP National Funding Opportunity
  - AFA RCPP National Funding Opportunity
    - No Announcement yet
      - Waiting on Departmental Approval

- EQIP WaterSMART Program
  - A Supplement to the Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSMART Program – Water Conservation and Efficiency Grants.
• Initiatives
  • Middle Republican NRD
    o 2021
      ▪ $481,509.00
      ▪ 15 NEW contracts
    o 2022
      ▪ $524,000.00
    o Priority Resource Concern
      ▪ Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency
  • Upper Republican NRD
    o 2021
      ▪ $18,014.00
      ▪ 1 NEW contract
    o 2022
      ▪ $250,000.00
    o Priority Resource Concerns
      ▪ Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency
      ▪ Nutrients Transported to Groundwater
      ▪ Plant Productivity and Health

Information about the EQIP- WaterSMART Initiative at the National NRCS Landscape Initiatives [website](#).

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❖ National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
  o FY 2021 Watersheds and Source Water Protection Areas - NEBRASKA
    ▪ Wahoo Creek
      • Lower Platte North NRD
        o FY21
          ▪ Obligations
            • $0.00
        o FY22
          ▪ Budget
            • $0.00
        • Still in Planning Phase
          o Recruiting Producer Interest

    ▪ Bazile Creek
      • Lower Elkhorn NRD
      • Lewis & Clark NRD
      • Upper Elkhorn NRD
        o FY21
          ▪ Obligations
            • $1,053,786.00
        o FY22
          ▪ Budget
            • $928,242.00
- Big Sandy Creek
  - Little Blue NRD
    - FY21
      - Obligations
        - $100,996.00
    - FY22
      - Budget
        - $454,709.00
- Turkey Creek
  - Lower Big Blue NRD
    - FY21
      - Obligations
        - $93,813.00
    - FY22
      - Budget
        - $760,690.00
- FY 2021 Allocation
  - Big Sandy
    - 8 Contracts
      - $100,996.00
  - Bazile
    - 37 Contracts
      - $1,053,786.00
  - Turkey Creek
    - 3 Contracts
      - $93,813.00

Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Program – US Forest Service & the USD-NRCS

- 3-Year Project
  - 2020
    - 5 Contracts
      - $331,015.00
      - 3,534.1 Acres
      - Practices included:
        - Forest Restoration
        - Brush Management
        - Woody Debris Removal
  - 2021
    - 5 contracts
      - $508,268.00
      - 6,749.7 Acres
- Practices included:
  - Forest Restoration
  - Brush Management
  - Woody Residue Treatment
  - Fuel Break

- 2022
  - X Contracts
    - $188,000.00
    - Acres
  - Practices included:
    - Forest Restoration
    - Brush Management
    - Woody Debris Removal
    - Fuel Break

- 2021 Two Tours
  - Pine Ridge Area verified producers interest in continuing the project.

- Partnerships participating
  - US Forest Service
  - NE Forest Service
  - Department of Transportation
  - NE Game & Parks
  - Other Contractors

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
  - NRCS is in an agreement with FSA with a MOA of providing technical assistance for CRP that was signed back in October 2019.
  - CRP Practice Installation
    - Certifying that practices on CRP-I were installed to NRCS standards & specifications.
      - Does not require site visit for most vegetative practices.
      - Structural/Engineering practices may require site visit
      - Potentially 3,000 contracts
  - CRP Practice Establishment
    - Performed no later than 2yrs after installation to determine approved cover is fully established.
    - 9,062 Fields reviewed.
  - CRP Contract Expiration
    - Performed not earlier than 3yrs before contract expiration to determine practice maintenance continues to be implemented.
    - Uses a list that expires 2022/2023
    - 7,683 fields reviewed.
Nebraska Great Plains Grassland Initiative (GPGI)
- Adopting a New framework for addressing Woody Encroachment
  - Landowner driven
  - Science informed
  - Agency supported

A PRIORITY FOR NEBRASKA NRCS
- NRCS Strategy for GPGI
  - Reducing woody encroached in the Grasslands
    - Train 91 people using this guide

![Diagram showing stages of woodland transition, dispersal & recruitment, and intact grassland]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Transition</td>
<td>Woody plant dominance</td>
<td>Heavy machinery - mechanical removal, fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>Scattered producing trees</td>
<td>Hand tools, heavy machinery - mechanical removal, fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispersal &amp; Recruitment</td>
<td>Intact with seedlings or incoming seed</td>
<td>Fire, hand cutting, haying, mechanical removal, browsers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact Grassland</td>
<td>Treeless with no seed</td>
<td>Avoid introducing seed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Changing the approach
  - Evaluate risk and vulnerability of a project
    - New Assessment
      - Sensitivity
      - Exposure
        - Risk
        - Adaptive capacity
          - Vulnerability

- 2022 Designated 4 Target Areas
  - Verdigris-Bazile Mod
  - Sandhills
Loess Canyons
Southwestern Mixed Grass Prairies
- Selected
- Assess the context and scale
- Neighboring influences and impacts
- Map the stages and vulnerability
- Establish, defend, and grow the core
- Mitigate impacts for your area
- Monitor outcomes and adapt

Priority Areas in EQIP – WIN
- 1st Cutoff for Applications
  - November 19, 2021
  - Allocated
    - $1.2 M toward GPGI from existing Wildlife Initiative fund pool
    - Will favor applications that are anchored to intact grasslands or established cores-muli landowner
    - Will favor applications that are working with partner organizations
  - Primary Practices for Payment
    - Prescribed Burning
      - Not required, but will be encouraged through ranking
    - Prescribed Grazing – Deferment to build fine fuel
    - Brush Management
      - Various levels of payment available
    - Pest Management
      - Per Acre payment for 3yrs
      - Will require removal of all seed producing trees
      - PAMS approach (PREVENT-AVOIDANCE-MONITOR-SUPPRESS)

Prescribed Burning
- Increase acres to have a meaningful impact
- Increase acceptance among landowners (cultural will)
- Promote and Encourage landowner Prescribed Burn Associations (PBA’s)
- Evaluate the allocation of dollars within programs to increase the incentive to adopt the practice.
- Increase capacity among NRCS employees (JAA and experience)
- Partner Cooperation

Q: In the next 5yr period, how many acres are you able to treat?

A: Would say as of today we don’t have acreage identified, however we are in the process of doing that, but it also will be contingent on funding, partners, other opportunities of RCPP projects. Also the strategy we are going to take in other areas of the state.
FSA REVIEW – CLEAR30 Cost list & Update on Migratory Birdsafe Project – Lavaine Moore, Conservation Program Specialist; Jana Ingwerson-Laws, Conservation Specialist, FSA

❖ CLEAR30 Cost List Review
  o Docket we are going to use for that program as we move forward.
  o Take this opportunity to review & get the approval of Roy Stoltenburg, State Appointed Committeeman.
    ▪ Can use that with the CLEAR30 Application

  o Clean Lake Estuaries and Rivers
    ▪ 2020
      • Had been a pilot project for Chesapeake Bay & Great Lakes states, now expanded nationwide beginning 2021
      • Existing/Expiring CRP water quality benefitting practices re-enrolled into 30-year CRP contracts
      • Signup was June 14, 2021 – August 6, 2021

    ▪ What practices are authorized?
      • CP8A – Grass Waterways, Non-easement
      • CP15A – Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips)
      • CP15B - Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips) on Terraces
      • CP23 – Wetland Restoration on a Floodplain
      • CP23A - Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
      • CP29 – Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer
      • CP30 – Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer
      • CP31 – Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetland
      • CP37 – Duck Nesting Habitat

    ▪ Payments
      • SIP or PIP are not authorized
      • Cost-Share not authorized but maintenance payments are authorized
      • Soil Rental Rates are calculated on the 3 predominant soil and includes:
        o SPI Adjustments
        o Reduction to 90%
        o 10% inflationary factor
        o Also include Climate-Smart incentive
          ▪ Applicable for the CLEAR practice
        o Water Quality Incentive
          ▪ 20%
CLEAR30
- Adjustment
  - 27.5%
- Max Rental Rate
  - $300 per acre

Monitoring and Maintenance
- NRCS/TSP conducts site visit every 3 years
- Conservation Plan modifications will occur as needed after site visits to schedule any needed maintenance activities over next 3 years
- Maintenance Activities include:
  - Practice establishment/re-establishment, activities needed to maintain the practice and included in the conservation plan
  - Traditional “mid-contract management” activities
  - Operation and maintenance activities as determined by NRCS monitoring site visits
  - CLEAR30 offers participants 2 options for performing maintenance:
    - Option 1 – participant performs all needed maintenance activities; FSA issues maintenance payment to participant. Payment rate: 75%
    - Option 2 – FSA will enter into an agreement or contract with a third-party vendor who will perform the needed maintenance activities onsite; FSA issues maintenance payment to vendor. Payment rate: 100%
- Maintenance Payment Rates
  - Must be established by FSA State Committee, in consultation with NRCS, for all CLEAR30 maintenance activities to be used within the State.

CRP: MIGRATORY BIRDS STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE
- SAFE Overview: Background
  - 2014 – Multi-State SAFE proposed by:
    - Playa Lakes Joint Venture
    - Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
  - January 2017 - Authorized by FSA National Office
    - Kansas – 10,000 acres
• Nebraska – 10,000 acres
  • February 2017 Migratory Bird SAFE Project was Approved
  • Currently Nebraska has 1,172 acres enrolled in Migratory Bird SAFE

  o The Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) project is designed to provide private landowners a market-based financial incentive for restoring playa wetlands.

  o There are three playa areas of Nebraska included in this CRP SAFE: Central Table Playas, Rainwater Basin, and Southwest Playas.

  o Under the 2018 Farm Bill Migratory Bird SAFE was modified to Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE.

  o No acreage allocation applies but is subject to the availability of the 25.5 million acre CRP statutory cap.

  o Participation in the Nebraska Migratory Birds, Butterflies, and Pollinators SAFE is limited to those landowners and agricultural producers interested in enhancing existing playas or restoring historic playas located within the following 3 regions:
    ▪ Rainwater Basin
    ▪ Central Table Playas
    ▪ Southwest Playas

  o Migratory Birds/Butterflies/Pollinators SAFE Offers is eligible for use in the following 42 counties.

  o **SAFE: Program Details**
    ▪ Signup Process
    ▪ Offers can be submitted anytime
    ▪ Continuous CRP
    ▪ Batching periods
    ▪ 1st batch period is February 18, 2022

  o **Program Requirements**
    ▪ Producer must meet the following land eligibility Requirements:
      • Playa hydrology must be restored to the full extent possible as determined by NRCS
      • Remove sedimentation
      • Fill concentrated pits
      • Remove fill within hydric soil footprint
• Eligible Land:
  o New land only
  o Cropland must be planted 4 out of 6 years (2012 – 2017)
  o 51% of the offer is within the project area
  o Located outside 100-year floodplain
  o Is a playa lake

Note: Marginal pastureland is not eligible.

• Contract Duration:
  o 10- to 15-year contracts

• Eligible Size:
  o Maximum enrollment per offer (tract) is 160 acres
  o Minimum offer is 2 acres for entire offer

• Amount of adjacent upland acres:
  o Limited to acres required to provide a protective buffer to the cropped wetland
  o Minimum average buffer is 120 feet
  o Buffer ratio of 4 to 1
  o Shall not exceed 4 to 1 ratio

• Annual rental amount for the duration of contract is determined by landowner
• NASS Dryland and Irrigated Cash Rental Rates are used to determine the offered rate by Playa Cluster
• SAFE offers will compete for enrollment on the basis of an index that reflects offer amount, wetland extent and Aquifer conditions

• Competitive ranking based on offer bid amounts
  o Landowner may submit an offer up to the NASS irrigated cash rental rate for applicable county
  o The lower the offer amount the higher the overall index value, the more likely an offer will be accepted

• No more than 50% of offers will be accepted during a batching period

• Continuous sign-up with batching period cutoffs:
  o First cutoff scheduled for Feb. 18, 2022
Program Details: Rainwater Basin Rental Rates
Program Details: Central Table Playas Rental Rates
Program Details: Southwest Playas Rental Rates

Program Payments
- Payments consist of:
  - Annual payments
  - Cost-share (50%) for cover establishment
  - A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP)
    - 50% of actual cost to install CRP practice
  - 1 one-time signing incentive payment (SIP)
    - One-time payment equal to 32.5% of the first full year (12 months) annual rental payment.

WETLANDS UPDATE – Corey King, State Wetlands Compliance Specialist, NRCS

- Wetlands UPDATE
  - Team Overview
    - Now up to 17 dedicated wetlands staff including 4 Compliance specialist, 9 Wetland Biologist, and 3 Soil Scientist.
      - 7 of those were hired during FY21
      - Continue to receive field support from Resource Soil Scientist as well.
  - FY 21 Wetlands Recap
    - Team Completed 1906 wetland determinations across Nebraska
    - Hosted phase 2 Wetland training in Lincoln
    - Updated the State Off-Site Manual (SOSM) and Indicators for FWs (Farmed Wetlands)
  - 4 Year Wetland Performance scale was covered.
  - FY22 Goals
    - Continue to manage high wetland workload
    - Roll-out Wetland Compliance Training for Field Offices
    - Add training opportunities for a new staff
    - Roll-out Potential Jurisdictional Waters (PJW) Guidance to staff
PARTNER UPDATES:

✈ CRAIG ROMARY, Nebraska Department of Agriculture
  o Funding is available for filter strips and riparian forest buffer strips through the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program. Contracts can be partnered with CCRP or as stand alone, and can be for new or renewing buffers, as well as filter strips left intact from expiring general CRP contracts. More information is at Nebraska Buffer Strip Program | Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Contact local NRCS or NRD offices to get started.

✈ Nick Streff, USDA-NASS
  o NASS will be doing a survey for NRCS this coming spring in March
    ▪ Conservation Practices Adoption Motivation Survey (CPAMS)
      • As we start to develop the training, we will keep you all involved.
      • Let you attend the training so you can see it or how we are training people enumerators to do that survey.
      • Don’t have the sample size for Nebraska yet.
        o 2 versions
          ▪ Crop
          ▪ Livestock
  o National sample size is usually
    ▪ Crop
      • Along 20,000
    ▪ Livestock
      • Along 14,000
    • Data Collection for that begins mid-March & goes through May.

Please send any further questions or comments to Tami Nordman @ tami.nordman@usda.gov

FUTURE 2022 MEETINGS:

✈ March 3
✈ June 2
✈ September 8
✈ December 1